

Wetlands Reserve Program Ranking Criteria

Information to Landowners:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Massachusetts has established this procedure to prioritize the Wetlands Reserve Program offers based on environmental criteria and cost to the agency. The ranking score will be based on NRCS evaluation of environmental and cost factors. NRCS will give priority consideration to the environmental criteria score in its selection of projects. Project cost information will primarily be used to differentiate among offers with equivalent environmental scores.

Information to NRCS Personnel:

One ranking must be prepared for each offer. Offers to enroll the same property under both permanent and 30 year easements constitute separate offers. Costs of projects must not be underestimated in order to improve the ranking score. Costs should be projected using local experience, comparable land sales and pertinent information provided by the landowner.

Applicant: _____ County: _____

Circle Type: Permanent Easement 30-yr. Easement 10-yr. Restoration

<u>Environmental Factors</u>	Points	<u>Cost Factors</u>	Points
A. Hydrologic Restoration - %	_____	J. Estimated Easement Cost	_____
B. Hydrologic Restoration – Ac	_____	K. Federal Cost Reduction	_____
C. Cropping History	_____	L. Landowner Bid Option	_____
D. Location Significance	_____	M. Restoration Costs	_____
E. T/E Habitat Value	_____		
F. Water Quality Benefits	_____		
G. Operation & Maintenance	_____		
H. Upland to Wetland %	_____		
I. Land Ownership	_____		

Total Environmental Points _____

Maximum 130 pts. – easement options

Maximum 110 pts. – 10-yr restoration

Total Cost Points _____

Maximum 50 pts. – easement options

Maximum 20 pts. – 10-yr restoration

Environmental Factors

A. Hydrologic Restoration - Percent

Percentage of offered acres (i.e., wetland and upland acres) that will be fully restored to original hydrologic condition by the planned practice(s):
(do not include acres that will have hydrologic restrictions such as upstream bogs dictating water levels; sites already restored, etc.)

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|--|----|
| 1. >75% of offered acres will be hydrologically restored. | 20 |
| 2. >50-75% of offered acres will be hydrologically restored. | 16 |
| 3. >25-50% of offered acres will be hydrologically restored. | 12 |
| 4. 1-25% of offered acres will be hydrologically restored. | 8 |
| 5. Site is already fully restored | 4 |

B. Hydrologic Restoration – Acres

Acres of wetland to be restored

- | | |
|----------------|----|
| 1. >60 acres | 20 |
| 2. 40-60 acres | 16 |
| 3. 20-39 acres | 12 |
| 4. 5-19 acres | 8 |
| 5. <5 acres | 4 |

C. Cropping History

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|---|----|
| 1. Land is presently in crop or forage production. | 10 |
| 2. Land was in crop or forage production within previous 5 years. | 5 |
| 3. Land was in crop or forage production > 5 years ago. | 0 |

D. Location Significance (check all that apply)

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|--|----|
| 1. Restoration site includes any 4 of the following. | 10 |
| 2. Restoration site includes any 3 of the following. | 7 |
| 3. Restoration site includes any 2 of the following. | 5 |
| 4. Restoration site includes any 1 of the following. | 3 |
| 5. Restoration site includes none of the following. | 0 |

____ Located $\leq \frac{1}{2}$ mile from a permanently protected conservation area held primarily for the protection and/or management of wildlife (does not include areas developed primarily for active public recreation - i.e., playgrounds, ball fields, parks with mown lawn, etc.)

____ Project is within a Core Habitat Area or Supporting Natural Landscape Area per MA BioMap.

____ Restoration site contains or is within 300 feet of a perennial river or stream.

____ Located within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

E. Habitat for Federal or state listed T/E species

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. Restoration site is designated for the protection or recovery of a Federal or state listed T/E species. | 10 * |
| 2. Restoration site is within a mile of a known Federal or state listed T/E species that will benefit from restoration practices. | 7 * |
| 3. Restoration is likely to provide migratory habitat (stopover) for Federal or state listed T/E species. | 5 * |
| 4. Restoration will provide no known benefits to Federal or state listed T/E species. | 0 |

* Please provide the name of the T/E species which will benefit from the proposed project.

F. Protection and Improvement of Water Quality (check all that apply)

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|---|----|
| 1. Project site includes 5 of the following. | 20 |
| 2. Project site includes 4 of the following. | 16 |
| 3. Project site includes 3 of the following. | 12 |
| 4. Project site includes 2 of the following. | 8 |
| 5. Project site includes 1 of the following. | 4 |
| 6. Project site includes none of the following. | 0 |

____ Located within a Sole Source Aquifer.

____ Located within a Zone II or Interim Wellhead Protection Area (IWPA).

____ Located within a medium or high yield aquifer.

____ Located within a half mile of a designated shellfish growing area.

____ Site has a direct hydrologic connection to a 303(d) listed water.

G. Operation and Maintenance (required to maintain wetland condition)

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| 1. Minimal or no management (ditch plugs, tile blockage, etc.). | 10 |
| 2. Infrequent maintenance required (infrequent repair/replacement of pipes, water control structure, etc.). | 5 |
| 3. Long term, intensive operation and maintenance (seasonal manipulation of water control structure, pumping required to support hydrology, etc.). | 0 |

H. Upland to Wetland Percentage

Acres of Upland / Acres of Wetland

- | | |
|----------------|----|
| 1. $\geq .5\%$ | 10 |
| 2. .4 to .49% | 8 |
| 3. .3 to .39% | 6 |
| 4. .2 to .29% | 4 |
| 5. .1 to .19% | 2 |
| 6. $< .1\%$ | 0 |

I. Land Ownership

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| 1. Land is under private ownership | 20 |
| 2. Land is owned by State/Local government; conservation group or non-profit agency. | 0 |
| 3. Restoration only agreement | N/A |

Cost Factors

J. Estimated Easement Cost per Acre

Cranberry Bog Applicants:

To help determine estimated easement cost/acre on cranberry bogs, use the following guidance: (abandoned cranberry bog = \$250/acre, upland/buffer = \$1000/acre, idle bog = \$2500/acre, producing bog = \$4000 to \$5000/ac).

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|---------------------------------|-----|
| 1. <\$1500 per acre. | 10 |
| 2. \$1500 to < \$3000 per acre. | 5 |
| 3. \$3000 to \$5000 per acre. | 3 |
| 4. Restoration only agreement. | N/A |

Non-cranberry applicants:

To help determine the estimated easement cost/acre, the following values should be used: cropland (PC, FW) and non-wetland buffer = \$3000/acre; pasture or hayland (FWP) = \$1000/acre; woodland and other degraded wetland = \$500/acre; saltmarsh and existing and/or previously restored wetland = \$250/acre.

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|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. < \$500 per acre | 10 |
| 2. \$500 to < \$1000 per acre | 7 |
| 3. \$1000 to \$2500 per acre | 5 |
| 4. > \$2500 per acre | 3 |
| 5. Restoration only agreement | N/A |

K. Federal Cost Reduction (landowner or cooperating partner(s) contributes monies to reduce the *federal* share of restoration costs)

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|--|----|
| 1. Federal restoration costs reduced by 75-100%. | 10 |
| 2. Federal restoration costs reduced by 50-74%. | 7 |
| 3. Federal restoration costs reduced by 25-49%. | 5 |
| 4. Federal restoration costs reduced by 1-24%. | 3 |
| 5. Federal restoration costs not reduced. | 0 |

L. Landowner Bid Option

Landowners may voluntarily accept less than the appraised value (or established cap, whichever is lower) in order to make the application more competitive. Landowners must provide NRCS with a separate written offer to earn points under this criterion. The landowner's offer must be submitted to the State Office along with a copy of the completed ranking sheet.

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|--|-----|
| 1. Landowner will accept >30% less of easement amount. | 10 |
| 2. Landowner will accept 20-30% less of offered easement amount. | 7 |
| 3. Landowner will accept 10-29% less of offered easement amount. | 5 |
| 4. Landowner will accept 1-9% less of offered easement amount. | 3 |
| 5. Landowner accepts 0% less of offered easement amount. | 0 |
| 6. Restoration only agreement | N/A |

M. Restoration Costs

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|--|-----|
| 1. Restoration costs are estimated to be less than the typical average (e.g., unique conditions which increase construction cost efficiency, etc.) | 10 |
| 2. Restoration costs are estimated to be average for the type of restoration. | 0 |
| 3. Restoration costs are estimated to be more than the typical average for the type of restoration. | -10 |

Ranking Exceptions

Please note whether there are any conditions that could warrant the State Conservationist to utilize his authority to enroll wetlands as an exception to the ranking process (e.g., obtain contiguous wetland acres under easement protection, reduce habitat fragmentation, ecologically significant wetlands whose values may not be captured through the ranking, etc.).
